

Template Opportunity Online Press Release
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation | U.S. Libraries Initiative
Opportunity Online Hardware Grants

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[Date]

Contact:

[Name of local library contact person]

[Telephone number]

[Email address]

**[NAME OF LIBRARY] Eligible for Grant to Improve Free Computer and Internet Services
for Community Residents**

[Name of Community] Must Raise \$# to Secure Funding

[CITY, STATE] – [NAME OF LIBRARY] is eligible for a \$[X] Opportunity Online hardware grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to help provide free, high-quality access to computer workstations for [NAME OF COMMUNITY]. The two-year Opportunity Online hardware grants program will provide funding to replace, and in some cases add, public computer workstations in libraries, as well as for associated training and tech support. The program is focused on helping libraries serving populations most in need and which are vulnerable to having their technology services become obsolete. Eligible libraries must obtain local funding commitments that demonstrate community support for maintaining computer upgrades.

With almost 40 percent of Americans still lacking Internet access at home, libraries are a critical link to technology for many who cannot afford the service on their own. Millions of Americans use computers and the Internet at public libraries to earn long-distance learning degrees, start and advance small businesses, find critical health information or jobs, learn English, get e-government information, and more. [INSERT LOCAL INFORMATION ON HOW FREE COMPUTER SERVICES AT THE LIBRARY BENEFIT YOUR COMMUNITY.]

“Computer and Internet access have become essential services that our patrons demand,” said [LIBRARY DIRECTOR OR LEAD STAFF – INSERT NAME AND TITLE]. “It is critical that we have the resources necessary to properly maintain these technology tools so that our library can help all people in [YOUR TOWN OR COMMUNITY] access the information they need to thrive and contribute fully to our community.”

While nearly 100 percent of U.S. public libraries now offer free computer and Internet services, many struggle to maintain them as budget cuts threaten to reduce operating hours, limit access to staff training and technical support, and make it difficult to keep pace with new technologies. [INSERT LOCAL STAT IF POSSIBLE AND/OR ANECDOTE THAT ILLUSTRATES THE CHALLENGE LOCALLY].

“It is virtually impossible to succeed today without access to computers and the Internet,” said Jill Nishi, program manager of the foundation’s U.S. Libraries initiative. “Fast, reliable online access can open a world of economic, educational, and social opportunities. It is imperative that all communities acknowledge the role our libraries play in providing this service and give libraries the support they need to continue providing critical technology tools long into the future.”

Opportunity Online hardware grants are expected to be the last grants given by the foundation to fund computer upgrades in U.S. public libraries with vulnerable technology, but the foundation continues to support libraries through investments in Internet connectivity, research, training, and advocacy.

[CONSIDER PROVIDING SOME MORE BACKGROUND ON YOUR LIBRARY, ITS PROGRAMS AND HOW IT WILL SEEK TO RAISE ITS MATCHING DOLLARS IF APPROPRIATE]

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About the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people's health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people—especially those with the fewest resources—have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. Based in Seattle, the foundation is led by CEO Patty Stonesifer and co-chair William H. Gates Sr., under the direction of Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett. More information is available at: www.gatesfoundation.org.